

Remarks/Arguments:

This amendment follows an Advisory Action dated August 1, 2003, in which the examiner observed that we had argued the references separately even though the rejection was based on obviousness. We did not mean to distinguish the invention from the references only individually: the reason the references were analyzed separately was to show that in none of them is there a disclosure or a suggestion of providing a partial adhesive coating on both sides of a vapor permeable substrate. We respectfully submit that the references do not render the invention obvious, either individually or in combination.

The examiner particularly relied on Groshens, which discloses dots on both sides of a sheet material. However, those dots are adhesive dots on only one surface: the dots on the other surface are not an adhesive. Groshens ('800) states: "Preferably, the less heat-fusible layer is made of a non-stick product, e.g. a silicone-based product". Those dots are made less heat fusible in order to avoid break-through of the adhesive dots. Groshens suggests providing dots of a first heat fusible material on one surface of the substrate, in order to connect a further layer to the substrate, but to provide the other surface of the substrate with a coating of less heat fusible (non-adhesive) material. The purpose is to provide interlinings where the adhesive cannot diffuse by crossing through the support element (see e.g., Patent 4732800, col. 2, line 20, or Patent 5827579, col. 3, lines 40 - 45). Groshens teaches that the second coating should not be an adhesive.

Because none of the prior art documents discloses or suggests applying adhesive dots to both surfaces of a sheet material, the combination recited in claim 8 is not obvious from the references, either alone or in combination.

It is also noted that claim 8 is limited to a vapor permeable sheet, water impermeable material. Starting from the admitted prior art as the closest prior art (where dot-like adhesive material is arranged on one surface of the sheet), the question is whether one skilled in the art would have been motivated to provide such dots in an aligned manner on both surfaces of a vapor permeable sheet so as to preserve its vapor permeability. Even though this improvement may seem obvious in retrospect, the references do not support a conclusion of obviousness, because they do not suggest the improvement claimed.

Claim 10, which is directed to a three-ply laminated sheet formation not disclosed in the prior art, and includes all the limitations of claim 8, has been rewritten in independent form.

Whereas claims 8 and 10 call for the surface coatings to be *at least* partially aligned, new claims 11 and 12 recite that the surface coatings on either side of the substrate are *only* partially aligned. This limitation is supported in the specification, e.g., at page 6, lines 8 - 10, and Fig. 3b.

We respectfully submit that the claims now presented are patentable over the prior art in that they are not obvious from the references taken in combination, and that the application as now presented is in condition for allowance.



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